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To Read or Not To Read: Navigating Young Adult Literature in the Classroom in the Age of Trigger Warnings and Banned Books

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Introduction

Before the 1900s, the terms "teenager" and "young adult" did not exist and were not considered demographic-describing nouns until World War Two (Cart 3). In fact, American society only recognized two defined stages of development, childhood and adulthood, with the point of transition between the two being the entrance of a child into the workforce, therefore entering adulthood (Cart 3-4). Then where did the terms come from, and how did they obtain such prominence in the past hundred years? According to Michael Cart, The Great Depression played a role in the emergence of "youth culture," in part due to the large increase of young individuals' high school attendance (5). With the emergence of youth culture came the slow and steady rise of literature targeted towards young adults from the ages of twelve to eighteen. As early as 1944, librarians began arguing that young adults "constituted a new service population" in regard to literature (Cart, "How 'Young Adult' Fiction Blossomed"). Cart notes that during the first forty years of the twentieth century, "opinions began coalescing around the viability of recognizing a new category of human being with its own distinct life needs," thus sparking the birth of a genre aimed towards these individuals (8).

In recent years, young adult literature has burst onto the literary scene, topping multiple bestseller lists and inspiring blockbuster films or television shows each year. However, the realm of young adult literature has been around for almost eighty years, with the first young adult book, targeted towards the teenage demographic, *Seventeenth Summer* by Maureen Daly, being published in 1942 (Strickland, "A Brief History"). Daly's novel started a snowball effect in the world of literature targeted towards teenagers, from Betty Cavanna's *Going on Sixteen* that was published in 1946 to Rosamund du Jardin's *Practically Seventeen* that was published in 1949, both chronicling the romantic ups and downs in the lives of teenage girls (Cart 14). However, as

Cart points out, many novels of this era were considered "junior novels" that "were typically sweet-spirited romances, a genre that defined the 1940s and 1950s" ("How 'Young Adult' Fiction Blossomed").

In the 70 years since these generative decades, young adult literature has blossomed into an all-consuming genre. Cart explains the transformation of young adult literature from the romances of the 40s and 50s to the successful genre it is today as "an exercise in evolution consonant with the evolution of the concept of the young adult itself" ("How 'Young Adult' Fiction Blossomed"). The 1970s brought forth the first "golden age" of young adult literature that encapsulated the "high school experience and the drama of being misunderstood," with books like *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier (Strickland, "A Brief History"). In the 1980s, young adult literature expanded its scope, allowing authors like Christopher Pike and R.L. Stine to bring the horror genre to young readers. Despite having an "eclipse" of young adult literature in the 1990s, "the book world began marketing directly to teens for the first time at the turn of the millennium," with young adult novels crowding the shelves of bookstores with the likes of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* saga (Strickland, "A Brief History"). This expansion of young adult literature in bookstores and in the media facilitated for the rise of more teen readers and the allowance of more young adult literature in the classroom, with books like *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky being added to summer reading lists.

Overall, young adult literature should inherently be optimized for use in the classroom, seeing as students will be more likely to read this type of literature outside of school. This project will provide an argument for the use of young adult literature in the classroom and its incorporation into mandated curriculum. The project will be broken down into four separate

components: an analysis of the importance of young adult literature usage in the classroom, an outline of obstacles that educators should consider when attempting to implement young adult literature in the classroom, an argument and analysis of the argument for the retention of canonical or classical literature in the classroom, and an annotated bibliography of selected young adult novels that could potentially be taught in the classroom.

The Importance of Young Adult Literature

Novels aimed towards young adults have been dominating the literary world for the past few decades. Cart determined the 1990s to be the transformative decade for young adult literature, with 1996 in particular marking "another significant turning point in young adult literature's coming of age as literature" (58). In the fall of that year, the National Council for Teachers of English's Assembly on Literature for Adolescents held a workshop with the theme, "Exploding the Canon," which gave supporters of the genre "another opportunity to trumpet the news that young adult literature was now *literature* that deserved a long-overdue place in a literary canon" (Cart 58). So-called "bleak books" were introduced to the adolescent audience and narrative in the 1990s, resulting in an "eruption of edgy young adult novels that were offering unsparingly dark looks at the lives of contemporary teens" (Cart 66). While some critics believed these kinds of books to be too dark for young readers, there were many who supported these kinds of young adult novels, such as Julia Rosen, a teenager from New York:

> Reading 'bleak books' helps us to realize what kinds of problems actual teens have. They broaden our outlook and help us become less apathetic about the world's problems. Until we live in a world where no problems exist, where adults always behave responsibly, and

> where there are always happy endings, adults must learn to accept that some of the books we read will describe the harsh realities of life. (qtd. in Cart 67)

The importance of young adult literature was further ingrained in the literary world by the introduction of the Michael L. Printz Award by the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) in 1999. The award, first given in 2000, "annually honors the best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit" (American Library Association, "The Michael L. Printz Award…"). The Printz Award, despite "success in recognizing and encouraging literary excellence" and being the foundation for new trends in YA literature, is not a notation of which books will become or were popular among young readers (Cart 80). Some books, although they hold literary merit of their own accord, are not always the most read books by teenagers and are not likely to land on lists such as the *New York Times* Bestseller List or the YALSA's Best Fiction for Young Adults.

According to Cart, a handful of the trends of young adult literature in the twenty-first century do not chronicle "artistic evolution"; instead, "some have demonstrated its ever-expanding commercial possibilities" (89). Since the turn of the century, the number of young adult titles published in a year has risen significantly, from about 4,700 titles in 2002 to over 10,000 titles in 2012 (Peterson, "Young Adult Book Market"). The market for young adult literature is booming, in part due to novels being incorporated in modern popular culture. Over the years, young adult literature has moved from the pages of a book to television series and full-length feature films. The first of its kind, *The Outsiders*, was released in 1983 almost 20 years after the publication of S.E. Hinton's renowned young adult novel. It was a success at the box office and set the stage for more adaptations of similar books. In 2001, J.K. Rowling's best-selling fantasy series, *Harry Potter*, received its own spot on the big screen, resulting in a

decade-long film dynasty, ending with the eighth film in 2011. The year 2008 saw the birth of the *Twilight* saga on the big screen, reaping huge rewards for Stephanie Meyer's 2005 debut vampire-romance young adult novel. In 2012, young adult fiction set in dystopian worlds hit the big screen with *The Hunger Games* based on the trilogy by Suzanne Collins, followed by *Divergent*, based on the trilogy by Veronica Roth, and *The Maze Runner*, based on the series by James Dashner, in 2014. Even popular and award-winning television series such as *Pretty Little Liars*, *Gossip Girl*, and *The Vampire Diaries* were inspired by and developed from young adult literature. Suddenly, the young adult genre was no longer just a literary market -- it was a film and television market, expanding to merchandise such as toys and clothing inspired by different young adult titles.

Commercial success was not the only driving factor behind the heightened market for young adult literature. Teenagers are more likely to read and engage with books with protagonists and characters that they can identify with. This is why books such as the sweet-spirited romances of the 40s and 50s and the rugged and realistic novels of the 70s and 80s were successful and devoured among young adult readers -- they saw themselves in the stories and protagonists of the novels that they were reading. For a majority of the novels in the young adult genre, protagonists are within the age range of twelve to eighteen, and "the story is told through teenage eyes" (Peterson, "Young Adult Book Market"). Categories of these novels range from dystopian to contemporary or realism to paranormal fiction. Appeal varies for different subgenres, but the common factor of most successful novels within the young adult genre are the high emotional stakes which "are commensurate with the raging hormonal intensity of the genre's intended audience" (Peterson, "Young Adult Book Market"). Adolescents would much rather read the fast-paced life or death scenarios of thrillers like *The Hunger Games* trilogy or

The Mortal Instruments series than the wordy slow-moving narrative of classics like *Frankenstein* or *Pride and Prejudice*.

However, even among the growing genre of young adult literature, there lie some inequities. Around the time that the genre was expanding to the big screen, "people in and outside the book publishing world became concerned with how white the industry was (and continues to be)" (Miller, "Young Adult Literature"). The monocultural tone of previously published young adult novels could not possibly appeal to a demographic that was rich with diversity. Most students, though they may find the stories to be worth reading, cannot relate to the white, middle-class protagonists from popular young adult novels such as *The Fault In Our Stars* by John Green or *The Perks of Being A Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky. For example, assigning *Lord of the Flies*, a novel that contains only male white characters, as a reading assignment for a class that consists of a mostly minority population would be a traditional choice, but novels like *The Hate U Give* or *The House On Mango Street* may be easier for students to relate to. With calls for diverse stories through Corinne Duyvis' Twitter hashtag #ownvoices, which "recommended kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group," and the nonprofit organization We Need Diverse Books "that issues grants to authors and [...] college students interested in book publishing internships," multicultural literature has found footing in the young adult genre (Miller, "Young Adult Literature"). In the past few years, the young adult genre has seen more novels published by and for minority populations, with diverse characters taking center stage in the written narrative. Novels like *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* written by Jenny Han and *Children of Blood and Bone* written by Tomi Adeyemi have given young adults of different ethnicities protagonists that they can see themselves in. The inclusion of multicultural literature in the classroom "enables us not only to

see ourselves in the pages of good books but also to see others, to eavesdrop on their hearts, to come to understanding and to [...] commonality" (Cart 129). Rather than be confined to the cultural norms of white, male writers like William Shakespeare and Ernest Hemingway, the introduction of young adult novels that encompass a variety of cultures allows students to learn more about themselves, others, and the world around them.

Obstacles to Using Young Adult Literature in the Classroom

Despite an increase in readership over the past few decades and the book-to-film pipeline that developed after the turn of the century, there are still some problems that may arise when trying to bring more young adult literature into the classroom. The threat of censorship is a constant for every author when they publish a new novel, collection of short stories, or collection of poetry. In 1967, the American Library Association founded the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) as a means to prevent the censorship of works of literature in libraries and schools across the United States. Shortly after it was established, the "OIF was receiving 250 communications each month, half of them requests for assistance" (Diaz and LaRue, "50 Years of Intellectual Freedom"). The constant occurrence of calls to ban different works of literature across the country eventually led to the creation of Banned Books Week in 1982, as "an annual event celebrating the freedom to read"; the celebration "spotlights current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools" ("Banned Books Week"). Topics that typically generate this kind of censorship response are profane language, sexually explicit situations, and violence. These books are usually "challenged with the best intentions -- to protect others, frequently children, from difficult ideas and information" ("Banned Book FAQ"). However, sometimes these intentions are ill-advised, as Alyssa Niccolini states, because "young people live in and

read about [...] a decidedly complex world where sex, violence, intolerance, and profanity are a reality" (27). To request the removal of novels with complex and sometimes controversial stories is to keep children from reading stories that may encapsulate the adolescent experience. Thanks to organizations such as the OIF and the Banned Books Coalition, the potential harm of banning books in schools and libraries has been brought to light, with events such as Banned Books Week succeeding in the encouragement of the fight against censorship and challenges brought against some of the most well-known young adult novels.

In the eyes of some adults, "adolescents are culturally constructed as being particularly impressionable to literature," and this is why there is a desire to shield them from the complexities of young adult novels that contain themes of racism, homosexuality, or sexual assault (Niccolini 24). For example, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson is a young adult novel that is commonly challenged in public schools across the country and has been since its publication in 1999. The novel deals with instances of rape and sexual violence and the effects this has on the fourteen-year-old victim, who is the protagonist and narrator of the book. Those who advocate for the removal of the novel from school curriculum and library shelves believe that the novel's content is not suitable for the young readers that it was intended for and that it will expose the adolescents to subject matter that is too mature for their age group. What these advocates fail to realize is that some students may have already been exposed to sexual violence in their own personal lives, as statistics show that "1 in 6 American women will be the victim of a completed or attempted rape in her lifetime" and that "44% of those rape victims are under age 18" (Anderson, "Challenges to Speak"). The same parallels can be drawn for novels encompassing other controversial topics as well. Some people may be inclined to challenge books like *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher because it deals with the issue of teenage suicide.

The book, though it never explicitly details the suicide of high school student Hannah Baker, discusses the thirteen tapes that she leaves behind, each one giving a reason as to why she killed herself. In the eyes of some parents, this may be seen as a romanticization of teenage suicide, and they would rather keep the novel as far away from their children as possible, despite the fact that "suicide is now the second leading cause of death for teens and young adults in the United States" ("Teen Suicide"). Rather than restrict teenagers from reading novels written about matters deemed too mature for them, adults should encourage them to engage with texts that may help them understand the adolescent experience as it relates to sensitive topics such as sexual assault and suicide.

Teachers are also faced with the concept of trigger warnings when it comes to what literature students read inside the classroom. As Adam Wolfsdorf states, it is "hard to imagine a single literary text worth teaching to high school students that [does not] delve deeply into some controversial topic" (39). Even a vast majority of classic works contain profane language or sex that causes parents to challenge the use of young adult novels in the classroom. For example, the play *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare deals with violence and even the untimely suicides of the title characters. However, it is the beauty of the words that Shakespeare uses to describe these controversial scenes that makes it a timeless classic that is constantly taught in secondary English classrooms not just across the country, but across the world. The bridge between the Bard and more modern works is that teachers have felt inclined to provide trigger warnings ahead of assigning such literary works in the classroom. Such warnings are meant to "psychologically protect students with a history of trauma related to sexuality, violence, racism, and other forms of abuse from raw exposure to topics, issues, and scenes that mirror personal experience and thereby awaken past traumas" (Wolfsdorf 39). Sometimes when reading a

particular book in class, teachers will send home a permission slip with students for parents to sign, granting or restricting their child the ability to study the novel. As Niccolini states, what teachers do not "or refuse to include in [their] curricula -- or what [they] are prohibited from including -- speaks as loudly as what [they] do include" (23). Wolfsdorf warns against the use of trigger warnings in English classrooms: "If high school students are given warnings about the literary scenes they are about to read, we have to wonder how this may negatively affect their ability to engage vulnerably with texts" (40). Despite this, there is still an assumption that "students with psychological trauma will [...] be damaged by encounters with controversial subject matter," so many teachers continue to present students with trigger warnings and permission slips, ultimately restricting their experience reading literature that would otherwise enrich their learning (Wolfsdorf 41). Literature with controversial and sensitive topics may be taught effectively in the classroom, without the need for censorship or trigger warnings, so long as educators are aware of the impacts the works may have on students and know the correct resources and techniques to help students navigate these issues.

Arguments For and Against the Classics: The Retention of Traditional Literature

If one were to look at the English and Language Arts curriculum for middle and high schools across the country, they would find an overabundant list of classic literature. From schools in Hawaii to schools in Maine, English students are reading classic novels by John Steinbeck and F. Scott Fitzgerald, plays by William Shakespeare and Arthur Miller, and poetry by Emily Dickinson and Ralph Waldo Emerson. However, this consistent teaching of classic literature often loses its edge with students, as Carol Jago so clearly points out:

> Somewhere around page 284 of *The Grapes of Wrath*, even the most dedicated English teachers often lose momentum and faith in the text. The students are whining. You have spent weeks on the book and no one likes it. Half the class isn't keeping up with the reading. You worry that the other half is reading the SparkNotes. At the video store you gaze guiltily at the Gary Cooper movie. (x)

As much as English teachers may enjoy reading, teaching, and sharing their love of literature with their students, the above situation is always a looming threat when classics are repeatedly brought into the classroom. According to Bob Seney, a professor in Gifted Studies at Mississippi University for Women, "the classics are not the literary resource that will help create many lifelong readers" (3). If students are consistently being forced to read novels and other types of prose that were not intended for young minds like theirs or contain language that in no way resembles how they speak in their English classes, then they are less likely to be engaged with the literature or even venture to read other, more suitable works outside of the classroom.

Seney, through research, personal experience, and discussions with adolescents about reading, compiled a list of reasons why young adults are not receptive to the traditional canon of literature that is typically taught in secondary English classrooms. The classics were not written with adolescents as the target audience in mind, are not a reflection of adolescents' needs or their realities, use a type of language that is outdated and unfamiliar to teenagers, and do not represent minority authors. The element of "stylistic prominence" that classifies something as a classic makes "appreciation and understanding unattainable for most young adults" (Seney 3). Additionally, students are typically not given the choice of what literature they read for class; instead, teachers assign classic and canonical works without student input because the curriculum says to, ultimately leading to students becoming disinterested in their reading.

According to Penny Kittle, students that "are determined nonreaders become committed, passionate readers given the right books, time to read, and regular responses to their thinking" (1). Many English teachers, if asked, would cite the curriculum and the Common Core standards as the reason for the constant assignment of traditional literature, calling attention to the movement towards "teaching to the test" in the classroom. This, as Kelly Gallagher states, is harmful to students' affinities to reading:

> High-interest reading is being squeezed out in favor of more test preparation practice. Interesting books are disappearing as funding is diverted to purchase "magic pill" reading programs. Sustained silent reading time is being abandoned because it is often seen as "soft" or "nonacademic." For many students, academic reading, though incredibly important, has become their only reading. [...] To make matters worse, students are drowning in marginalia and a sea of sticky notes. (4-5)

Granting students a choice of what they read may ultimately combat and, hopefully, eliminate what Gallagher refers to as "readicide," the "killing" of the love of reading and reading overall in students. One way to do this without having to work around the Common Core is to include Sustained Silent Reading time at the beginning or end of each class. Though Gallagher does not present an argument against teaching the classics, he does believe that "when academic reading is the only kind of reading put on our students' plates, readicide occurs" (44); therefore, giving students unstructured time to read whatever they want and to go at their own pace will most likely encourage and develop a group of young readers.

Unfortunately, some students are not always able to choose literature outside of the canon that presents exceptional literary merit. Most "disinterested and struggling readers [do not] know how to choose books that match their passions and abilities, and without attention, they drift

along without reading, or when pressed, they choose [what is] popular, not [what is] truly terrific writing" (Kittle 19). In some cases, especially in the classroom, student choice is not always the most optimal choice for conducive learning and literary comprehension. As Gallagher states, "students are at an age in which they are trying to make sense of adulthood" so "they need exposure" to traditional literature such as *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (93). Despite the fact that "these stories offer readers access to other worlds, other times, other cultures," students cannot be expected to navigate through these complex works of literature on their own -- students "need help looking through the window of most classical texts" (Jago 5). It is the teacher's responsibility to guide students through the complexity of these traditional works of literature, giving them the needed support and skills to comprehend what they are reading, a position which is echoed by Jago, who believes it is a teacher's job to not just "drag students through a series of books but rather to show them how stories work" (60). Seney asserts that teachers must be "aware of the hurdles" that may arise when "bringing the literature alive for students," as well as making the novels relatable to students (4).

There are plenty of avenues that teachers can take to make the teaching of classical literature fun and exciting for students, including, but not limited to, creating assignments based off of modern trends (i.e., social media challenges); introducing a cinematic study of film, television, or theater, and how it relates to the original work; or even bridging more canonical works with modern novels inside the young adult genre (See Appendix A). According to Seney, "in pairing young adult novels with classic novels, we look for books with similar themes, situations, and issues" (4). For example, an English teacher may be keen to teach *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee to their students, noting the classic novel's themes of racism and racial inequality. However, in a way to make the events of the 1960 novel more relatable to

students, the teacher could opt to include novels like *All-American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely and *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone in the curriculum in place of or in conjunction with Lee's novel. This may lead to the end of Gallagher's warning against "readicide" among students while also introducing them to a world of literature that was written *for* them and even sometimes *by* them.

Annotated Bibliography for Young Adult Novels to Teach in the Classroom

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli

About The Book

Becky Albertalli's debut novel, published in 2015, follows sixteen-year-old Simon Spier as he navigates his perfectly normal junior year with his friends -- classes, homecoming, the school musical, anything typical of a high school student in Creekwood. The only problem is that Simon has a big secret that not even his closest friends, Nick, Leah, and Abby, know: he is gay. This secret, however, is at risk of being exposed when an email falls into the hands of class clown, Martin, who decides to blackmail Simon. If Simon plays wingman for Martin trying to score a date with Abby, then Martin will refrain from telling the whole school that Simon is gay -- and Simon goes along with it. Not only is the exposure of his sexuality at risk, but so is the identity of Blue, the anonymous boy that Simon has been emailing. Through trying to keep his secret from being exposed on Creekwood Secrets, the school's gossip blog, the novel follows Simon as he navigates his relationship with his friends, his online pen pal, and ultimately, himself.

In addition to receiving four out of five stars on Goodreads.com and stellar reviews from other published authors, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* has been nominated for and

awarded various literary awards. The book has been nominated for various awards such as the Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award for Young Adults, the Lincoln Award, and the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and won the William C. Morris YA Debut Award in 2016 (Albertalli, "Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda").[1] The novel was picked up to be developed into a film by Fox 2000 production studios. The film, titled *Love, Simon*, was directed by Greg Berlanti, an openly gay director, writer, and producer, and released in March of 2018, starring Nick Robinson as Simon alongside other well-known names like Katherine Langford, Jennifer Garner, and Josh Duhamel. The film has been nominated for and won many awards, including the Teen Choice Award for Choice Comedy Movie and the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film. The novel has also expanded its reach to the "Simonverse," which contains the original novel and film along with other novels taking place in Creekwood, such as *Leah On the Offbeat*, and a spin-off television series on Hulu titled *Love, Victor*.

Things to Consider Before Assigning the Book

According to the American Library Association, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is not regularly challenged or banned across the country and is not one of the top 100 banned or challenged books in the 2010s, despite being listed on their complete banned and challenged books list for 2018 and 2019. However, potential challenges could arise from the novel's focus on an LGBTQ youth's coming out journey, the use of slurs regarding the LGBTQ community, the use of profanity, and discussion of sex, though there are no explicit sex scenes in the book. Teachers and parents should note that the discussion of sex in the book is focused on allusions to gay sex and masturbation, which may allow for dialogue surrounding safe sex practices. *Simon*

[1] The Morris Award is given out by the American Library Association each year to "a book published by a first-time author writing for teens and celebrating impressive new voices in young adult literature" (American Library Association, "Morris Award").

vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda should not be read in a middle school classroom for these reasons. It also may not be appropriate for high school freshmen, but would be suitable for students in tenth grade and higher. It should be noted that only a few, specific factors contribute to the fact that the book is not suitable for younger students. Overall, the book is not graphic but is a heartwarming story that gives off the feel of a romantic comedy film, such as *10 Things I Hate About You* or *Clueless*.

There is not much that would garner the need for a trigger warning. Teachers should inform students that the book is about a gay sixteen-year-old boy and that there is a steady stream of inappropriate language throughout, including curse words and sexual innuendos. A component of the novel's plot includes the forced outing of Simon as gay, which may be uncomfortable or potentially triggering for some students depending on their own experiences. This plot allows for the discussion of "coming out" and "outing" members of the LBGTQ community and why this may be harmful for those individuals. Students should also be made aware of the blackmail storyline and how this relates to bullying and cyberbullying, which some students may have experienced and would feel uncomfortable reading about.

How the Book Fits in the Classroom

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda is a pretty simple novel that can be taught in the classroom. Not only is the language that Albertalli uses modern and relatable to students, but the characters are also teenagers, bridging a sense of familiarity for the students reading the book. This novel could be used as a tool to educate students about the importance of healthy relationships, as one of the things that Simon navigates throughout the story is managing his relationships with his friends, family, and virtual crush. This also allows for the discussion of

conflict and conflict resolution. Teachers may pair this particular book with a lesson on conflicts such as person vs. person, person vs. self, and person vs. society.

As a modern love story, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* could be used in replacement of or in conjunction with classic love stories such as *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare or *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, both typically taught in high school classrooms. Another subtle but overarching theme in the book is the school production of the musical, *Oliver!*, which Simon, Abby, and Martin are a part of. This can be used to help students embrace different fine arts subjects such as acting or dancing. Students could be allowed to watch the movie *Love, Simon* either on their own or in class and answer guided viewing questions or complete a short response paper on the differences between the novel and the film, as there are plenty.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

About the Book

First published in 1999, Laurie Halse Anderson's novel is about a high school freshman by the name of Melinda Sordino, who, after accidentally busting an end-of-summer party by calling the police, has been ostracized by her peers and former friends. Now she is starting high school and realizing that no one will talk or listen to her, eventually leading to her increased isolation and cessation of talking altogether. Her grades plummet, and her only solace is art class, where she learns how to face what happened to her at the party: being raped by an upperclassmen at her high school who is still intimidating and harassing her at school. Throughout the school year, Melinda has to learn how to speak up for herself as she gradually comes to terms with the trauma that she has endured in the past year. The novel follows

Melinda's journey throughout the school year, divided into sections represented by the school's marking periods, and each section has a report card of Melinda's grades for the corresponding marking period.

Since its publication, *Speak* has been widely acclaimed, listed on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and translated into over a dozen languages. It has been republished in five different international editions, a twentieth-anniversary edition, and a graphic novel, both in English and Spanish (Anderson, "Speak: Original Edition"). The novel has been nominated for and won a multitude of awards, including the California Young Reader Medal, the Golden Kite Award for Fiction, and the PA Carolyn W. Field Award. It was a National Book Awards finalist for Young People's Literature in 1999 and received the Michael L. Printz Honor in 2000. In 2004, the novel was adapted into an independent film directed by Jessica Sharzer that starred Kristen Stewart. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004 and premiered on two television channels, Showtime and Lifetime, in 2005.

Things to Consider Before Assigning the Book

The American Library Association has *Speak* listed on its frequently banned young adult novels list, as the book has been challenged and banned since its publication in 1999. *Speak* has ranked 60th and 25th among the top 100 banned or challenged books for the 2000-2009 and 2010-2019 decades, respectively. The overarching themes of rape and violence are the predominant factors contributing to the novel's constant censorship. In September of 2010, a Missouri State University professor named Wesley Scroggins published an opinion piece claiming that *Speak*, along with *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Twenty Boy Summer*, should be banned from English curriculum, classifying Anderson's novel as "soft pornography" (Scroggins, "Filthy

Books…"). Anderson has been very outspoken about the dangers of censorship, particularly in regard to her book. She responded to Scroggins' article in a blog post on her website, stating that he "mischaracterized" the book. Anderson also has a page linked on her website that is related to the censorship of *Speak*, where she gives facts and statistics about sexual assault and emphasizes the importance of educating children rather than shielding them.

Because of the sensitive nature surrounding sexual assault in the novel, the study of the novel should be avoided in younger classrooms, particularly at the middle school level. However, *Speak* is a very important novel for students to read because of the way it deals with sexual assault and trauma. Students and parents should be made aware that the novel's overarching theme is trauma resulting from a rape, as some parents may not want their children to read something of that nature. The novel contains themes of social isolation and bullying told from the victim's point of view which may be harmful to some students who have had similar experiences as the novel's protagonist. There is also a scene towards the end of the novel that includes a violent encounter between Melinda and her attacker that students should be made aware of before reading the novel.

How the Book Fits in the Classroom

Despite being published in 1999, Anderson's novel is still an important and relevant novel for students to read and discuss in the classroom. Anderson has stressed the importance of *Speak* in classrooms and in the general repertoire of young readers. On her website, Anderson has links to discussion questions, hands-on activities and social projects, and teaching units that revolve around the novel. Teachers can utilize these resources when having students read *Speak* as a whole class. However, there is the flexibility to be more creative when it comes to

assignments related to the novel. A lot of Melinda's first person narrative in *Speak* takes place in school and in her various classes including art and geography; students could potentially discuss or do a writing exercise about the effect of schooling on a young person's mental health. Since there is a film version of the book, students could also watch it on their own or in class and answer guided viewing questions or write a comparison of the novel and film.

Because one of the overarching themes of the novel is rape and sexual assault, teachers may be able to use *Speak* as a way to educate and inform students about consent. If the novel is taught in an English classroom, the teacher may be able to develop a cross-curricular lesson with a health and sex education teacher that informs students about sexual assault and consent. Since most public schools already include a sex education component in their health and physical education classes, this novel could be taught in that type of class without cross-curricular involvement. Teachers can also use the novel to educate students about bullying, social isolation, and socio-emotional health by having students complete a character analysis of Melinda.

The Smell of Other People's Houses by Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock

About the Book

Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock's debut novel takes place in Alaska in 1970, just over ten years after Alaska received its American statehood, and follows the story of four different kids with four very different lives. Ruth, the first narrator in the book, has a secret that she cannot hide forever. Dora is aching to escape the life that she comes from and wonders whether she will actually be able to, even when she has a brush with good luck. Alyce is struggling between her love for dance and her love for her father, particularly when she has to choose between spending the summer dancing or with her father on his fishing boat. Hank and his younger brothers decide

that it is better for them to run away than to stay home with their mother and her boyfriend -- until one of them finds himself in danger. Each of them must find the courage, strength, and heart to survive each of their respective situations. The four narratives are deeply entrenched in the relationships between native Alaskans and American citizens who moved to the territory following its statehood in 1959.

The novel, published in 2016, is critically acclaimed by authors like Gayle Forman, best-selling author of *If I Stay*, and John Corey Whaley, award-winning author of *Where Things Come Back*. It has also received praise from publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* and Bustle.com. *The Smell of Other People's Houses* was nominated for a plethora of awards, such as the William C. Morris Award, the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award for Young Adult Fiction, and the Carnegie Medal.[2] The novel was placed on the Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best List and the New York Public Library's Best 50 Books for Teens list. It was also nominated to the Oklahoma Sequoya Book Award Master List and the Colorado Blue Spruce Young Adult Book Award. Hitchcock's own familiarity with the terrain and life in Alaska due to her upbringing in the state lends to the unique narrative of the novel and the experiences of the four main protagonists. The novel has also been published in a variety of languages including Spanish, Polish, and Russian.

Things to Consider Before Assigning the Book

The Smell of Other People's Houses is not listed on the American Library Association's top 100 banned or challenged books from the 2010s, so it can be assumed that the novel has not faced much criticism from parents, educators, or others for its subject matter. However, this does

[2] The CILIP Carnegie Medal is a British literary award given to "an outstanding book written in English for children and young people" ("About the Awards").

not mean that it would not warrant any potential attempt of censorship. Potential challenges could arise from the respective journeys that each of the four main characters of the novel experience: Ruth's teenage pregnancy, Dora's experience with her father's violent tendencies and her mother's alcoholism, Alyce's broken family with divorced parents, and Hank's decision to run away with his young brothers. Some parents may not feel comfortable allowing their children to read a novel about a pregnant teenage girl, a violent and dysfunctional family, and a trio of brothers that run away from their mother's abusive boyfriend. The novel itself, however, is not graphic and is easy to read, which may make it suitable for a younger audience, granting it the versatility to be taught in middle and high school classrooms. The only factor that may prohibit the novel from being assigned in a middle school English class would be the controversy surrounding Ruth's story: premarital sex and teenage pregnancy.

Because of the complexity of the subject matter of the novel, students should be made aware of the different natures of each narrator's stories. Students should be made aware of the topic of Ruth's teenage pregnancy, as this is a topic that may make a few parents and even students uncomfortable, especially due to the surge of reality television and other social media depicting teenage motherhood. There are also instances of violence in both Dora's and Hank's narratives which students should be made aware of, as they may not feel comfortable reading about gun violence, domestic abuse, and alcoholism. Alyce's narrative consists of the divorce of her parents, which may resonate with some students due to their own personal experiences. This may allow students the ability to come to terms with their own relation to the concept of divorce and how their personal situation may relate to Alyce's.

How the Book Fits in the Classroom

Despite not having many resources online in relation to working the novel into an English class's curriculum, *The Smell of Other People's Houses* features a short discussion guide in the back of the paperback edition. This can be used as a guide for teachers to stimulate conversation about the book in the classroom. Since the novel covers an array of topics, it can be used to educate students about potential real-life experiences including teenage pregnancy, divorce, and alcoholism. The uniqueness of the novel allows the ability for it to be a new and intriguing work of literature to introduce to students in the classroom, acting as a breath of fresh air after the confines of classical literature such as *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. Because Hitchcock includes four narrators rather than one, students could be encouraged to discuss how this affects the overall narrative of the novels and even compare it to other books that have more than one narrator such as *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner or *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, classical novels that may also be assigned in a secondary English classroom.

The setting of the novel allows for the possibility of a cross-curricular lesson plan with a history or social studies classroom. Throughout the novel, there is discussion about Alaska receiving its statehood in 1959, which is eleven years before the events in the novel take place. By reading the novel, students are able to gain insight into how statehood affected the lives of Alaskan natives and how some people, like Ruth's father, fought back against the American statehood of the territory. Because of the inclusion of native Alaskan families, the novel could be used to educate students about the native tribes of Alaska. This novel could be a good alternative to teaching *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie in the classroom. The novel could also potentially be involved with cross-curricular lessons in health classes, as the novel deals with teenage pregnancy and alcoholism. *The Smell of Other People's Houses* can be used to discuss the importance of practicing safe sex and the damaging effects

that alcohol, particularly the excessive use of the substance, can have on one's physical and emotional health, as well as the lives of those around the individual abusing alcohol.

This Is Where It Ends by Marieke Nijkamp

About the Book

Published in 2016, Marieke Nijkamp's debut novel is told from the perspective of four high school seniors in Alabama after a former student, Tyler Browne, locks a majority of students and teachers in the auditorium and opens fire. The novel alternates between four narratives: Autumn, the younger sister of Tyler; Sylv, Autumn's girlfriend and Tomas' twin sister; Claire, the former girlfriend of Tyler; and Tomas, Sylv's twin brother. Each narrative takes place over a 54-minute period, as Tyler terrorizes and holds the school hostage as a means of revenge, leaving thirty-nine students dead once the hour is up. While Claire, who was outside training for track when the shooting began, is left to watch as the events inside the school unfold from outside, Autumn, Sylv, and Tomas are trapped inside with the shooter. As the 54 minutes tick by, the lives of the four narrators come crashing together, and each of them must grapple with their relationship to Tyler and what led him to bring a gun to the school with the intent to kill.

This Is Where It Ends has received critical acclaim from various publications, such as *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *School Library Journal*. It also received high praise from other young adult authors, including Julie Murphy, *New York Times* best-selling writer of *Dumplin'*, and Todd Strasser, award-winning writer of *Give A Boy A Gun* (Nijkamp, "This Is Where It Ends"). Aside from being listed as a number one *New York Times* bestseller, the novel has also been listed as a Publishers Lunch Buzz Book in 2015 and Goodreads Best Book of the

Month in January 2016. It has been nominated for and named a finalist for numerous awards including the 2017 Teen Choice Book Award, the Cybil Award for Best YA Fiction, and the Goodreads Choice Award for Best YA Fiction. The novel was listed as one of the best books of the decade by different publications, such as *Buzzfeed* and *Paste Magazine*. It has been translated and published in a variety of languages including Polish, German, and Dutch.[3]

Things to Consider Before Assigning the Book

Although Nijkamp's novel is not listed on the American Library Association's top 100 challenged or banned books for the 2010s, the subject matter is potentially triggering enough to warrant an attempt of censorship if brought into the classroom. The plot of the novel follows the 54-minute course of a school shooting, which may be uncomfortable for some students to read. It may also raise concerns from parents, as they may feel that the subject matter is too mature and tragic for their children to read, as well as give vulnerable students ideas for how to trap victims. Because the novel does follow a school shooting, there is a substantial amount of violence and death that occurs in the book, which may not be suitable for students. It is also important to note that two of the narrators, Autumn and Sylv, are queer and in a relationship, which may present some challenges from parents or students who may not find this appropriate.

Since the nature of the novel is complex and tragedy-ridden, students should be made aware of the various, potentially triggering themes featured in the narrative. Firstly, it should be made known that students are about to read a book that is exclusively about a school shooting. Due to the prominence of gun violence, especially in schools and among young people, the topic of school shootings may be uncomfortable for an array of students. Despite the overarching

[3] Nijkamp was born and raised in the Netherlands, so it would make sense that her novels would be translated into Dutch, the native language of her home country (Nijkamp, "Marieke").

theme of the shooting, students should be made aware of the more subtle instances of violence and death that are explicitly mentioned throughout the novel. Most importantly, students should be informed of the fact that one death that involves a major character occurs towards the end of the novel, which may potentially be difficult for some students to read.

How the Book Fits in the Classroom

On Nijkamp's website, there is a link to a discussion guide about *This Is Where It Ends*, which may help to facilitate a discussion about the novel in the classroom. Questions on the guide refer to the book overall, the main characters, death and grieving, and school shootings. More specifically, the novel could be used as an important tool to discuss with students what may lead to a school shooting, as well as how to handle the aftermath of the incident. Because of how publicized school shootings have been in previous years, especially following Sandy Hook in 2012 and Parkland in 2018, Nijkamp's novel could be used as a way for students to discuss how this type of event makes them feel and how it might affect their feeling of safety in schools after hearing about something as traumatic as a school shooting on the news. When this book is assigned in the classroom, it may also be beneficial for students to hear from a school security or resource officer on the policies and procedures in place if there were to be an active shooter situation at the school.

Because of the complexities of this novel, there could be room for a cross-curricular lesson that would allow students to learn more about and discuss the psychological effects that this kind of traumatic experience may have on adolescents. After reading the book in an English class, students can also discuss it further in a psychology class. Students may learn more about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and how it can affect individuals differently depending

on the traumatic experience that they have had. It may also be beneficial for students to watch documentaries or interviews with individuals who experienced a school shooting to hear how the event may have impacted their childhoods and, eventually, their adult life. Teachers may also include the anthology, Parkland Speaks, in the curriculum. The anthology includes art and writing from survivors of the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Parkland, Florida, chronicling the students' emotional journeys following the shooting.

Boy 21 by Matthew Quick

About the Book

Published in 2012, *Boy 21* is Matthew Quick's second young adult novel. The story follows high school senior Finley in his hometown of Bellmont, which is ruled by the Irish Mob, drugs, violence, and racially driven rivalries. His home life is just as tumultuous as the neighborhood around him, as he takes care of his disabled grandfather because his father is often absent. The only solace that he can find is through playing on the varsity basketball team at school, where his teammates call him "White Rabbit" because he is the only white kid on the team. Finley has always dreamed of getting out of Bellmont with his girlfriend, Erin, but for now, he puts on the number 21 and everything feels okay. But when former teenage basketball phenom Russ moves to the neighborhood after a family tragedy and only answers to the name Boy 21, Finley is tasked with helping him acclimate to his new life. Their final year of high school brings the unlikely pair together, with "Boy 21" possibly being the answer that they both need.

Following its publication, the novel has been listed on the *New York Times* Book Review Editors' Choice list, the YALSA 2013 Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults, and the *Kirkus*

Reviews' Best Teen Books of 2012. *Boy 21* was also nominated for the *L.A. Times* Book Prize in Young Adult Literature and the German Youth Literature Prize in 2016. It has been translated into various languages including Korean, Polish, German, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Dutch, Hungarian, Spanish, and Turkish (Quick, "Boy 21"). The novel has received critical acclaim from various publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Guardian* (UK), and *Publishers Weekly*. It also received praise from other young adult authors including Francisco X. Stork, writer of *Marcelo in the Real World* and *Last Summer of the Death Warriors*, and A.S. King, Printz honoree author of *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* and *Everybody Sees the Ants*.

Things to Consider Before Assigning the Book

Although the American Library Association does not have *Boy 21* listed as one of the most challenged or banned books in the country, it does not mean that the book would not warrant attempts of censorship if it was introduced in the classroom. The setting of the novel and the circumstances surrounding it may be too mature or uncomfortable for some parents and students. There may be discomfort among educators, parents, and students when discussing the fact that the book takes place in an impoverished neighborhood that is riddled with gangs, specifically the Irish Mob, and racially charged rivalries. The fact that both Finley and Russ have experienced death in their respective families may be another component of the novel that could make parents uncomfortable if their children were to read it. The overarching themes of violence, as they relate to gang violence and murder, is something that some people may not believe is appropriate for school children to read in the classroom.

There are a lot of issues throughout the novel that students should be made aware of before they read the book for class. Students should know that one of the overarching themes is the gang-riddled community and the violence that ensues because of the gangs. They should also be aware that both Finley and Russ exhibit symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which may make some students uncomfortable when reading. There are also discussions of racism and racial issues scattered throughout the novel. Though this is not as prominent as the themes of gang and gang violence, the concept is something that students may benefit from knowing that it is a part of the narrative.

How the Book Fits in the Classroom

Boy 21 is one of few young adult novels that contains an array of discussion questions in the back of the book; the questions are also listed on Quick's professional website if the book is not readily available to teachers or students. These questions encompass the events in the novel, as well as character development and personal opinion of the book itself. The novel could be used as a tool to educate students about gang life and violence and how that can affect someone's life, family, and the community in which the gang resides. This could be especially valuable in classrooms or communities where students are affected by gang violence in their personal lives. The novel could also be used to discuss what leads some students to become part of a gang and what to do when someone they love has been affected by gang violence. It could be beneficial for students to discuss how types of gangs differ depending on race and the community, as Finley's neighborhood is mostly run by the Irish Mob, which may be very different from the kinds of gangs that most students may be accustomed to.

One of the main themes of the book is basketball and how the sport has shaped characters like Finley and Russ, as well as provided them the solace that they need to escape from the realities of their own lives. The novel could be used in conversations with students about their own outlets for stress, whether it be sports or other extracurricular activities, and how their situations might relate to either of the characters in the novel. There could also be a cross-curricular activity between English and psychology class, as a majority of the novel focuses on the PTSD that Russ is experiencing after the death of his parents. Teachers could facilitate discussions about trauma and how it manifests in different ways for individuals depending on the person and situation. This could also potentially lead to a discussion about how the death of a loved one can impact a person's mental and physical health and how this also varies from person to person.

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

About the Book

The Hate U Give started as a short story inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement for Angie Thomas's senior project at Belhaven University and evolved into her debut novel, published in 2017.[4] The novel follows the story of sixteen-year-old Starr Carter as she moves between the two worlds that she belongs to: the mostly black and poor community of Garden Heights where she lives and the predominantly white private school of Williamson Prep where she and her brothers go to school. The line between these two worlds is shattered after Starr witnesses her childhood best friend, Khalil, being shot and killed by a police officer -- Khalil was unarmed, reaching for a hairbrush that the officer mistook for a weapon. Within days, Khalil's

[4] In an interview with EBONY Magazine, Thomas revealed that she was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and the killings of people like Trayvon Martin and Sandra Bland to length her short story project from college into a full-length novel -- *The Hate U Give* (Philyaw, "One-on-One with 'The Hate U Give' Novelist").

death is a national headline and protesters are taking to the streets in his name. As people start to paint her friend as a thug and gangbanger, Starr has to grapple with what she witnessed, whether or not she can speak up about it, and what her actions might cost her and her family.

Immediately following the novel's publication, *The Hate U Give* debuted at the top of the *New York Times* Young Adult bestseller list, drawing almost instant acclaim from critics, librarians, and other authors, as well as receiving four and a half stars on Goodreads.com (Alter, "New Crop…"). It has been nominated for and won an array of awards, including the William C. Morris Award, the Coretta Scott King Book Award Author Honor, and the Michael L. Printz Award Honor. It was on the National Book Award longlist and was a nominee for the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Young Adult. When the book was auctioned off to publishers in 2016, its film rights were also optioned by Fox 2000 studios (Alter, "New Crop…"). The film, released in the United States in October 2018, was directed by George Tillman, Jr., and starred Amandla Stenberg, Russell Hornsby, and Regina Hall. It was nominated for and won a plethora of awards, including the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture and the African-American Film Critics Association Award for Best Picture. A prequel to *The Hate U Give* was published in 2021 titled *Concrete Rose*, which follows Starr's father, Maverick, and occurs seventeen years prior to the events in the original novel.

Things to Consider Before Assigning the Book

Despite only having been published in 2017, *The Hate U Give* ranks 30th on the American Library Association's Top 100 Most Banned and Challenged Books for the 2010 decade, ranking higher than books published long before Thomas' debut novel. The novel was featured in the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom's field report of banned and challenged

books for 2018 and was noted as one of the top 11 most challenged books in 2018. The challenges against the novel have cited issues with language, sexual situations, drug usage, and violence as themes unsuitable for young readers (ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom Staff, "Field Report 2018"). The novel has also been challenged for its portrayal of police brutality and references to the Black Lives Matter movement. In South Carolina, the Fraternal Order of Police Tri-County Lodge #3 requested that the novel be removed from the summer reading list for freshmen at Wando High School in Mount Pleasant, SC, citing that the book "could stoke anti-police sentiment" (Roberts and Griggs, "Police are protesting…"). Thomas has been vocal about the importance of her novel and urges the discussion of topics such as police brutality with young readers that might pick up the book.

Since the overarching themes of the book are police brutality and violence, *The Hate U Give* is not suitable for middle school readers. Profane language is also frequently used throughout the novel, including "89 F-bombs," that some parents may not feel comfortable letting their children read in a school-assigned book (Canfield, "*The Hate U Give* author…"). Students should be made aware of violent scenes throughout the novel, including the shooting of Khalil, instances of gang and gun violence, and a physical altercation between Starr and another student. There are conversations and first-person narrative in the book that deal with race and racism that some students may not feel comfortable reading or discussing. Teachers may be more comfortable if they explain to students that the novel is not anti-police, as it includes a police officer character who is a part of the protagonist's family, but it does reflect recent protests against police brutality.

How the Book Fits in the Classroom

The Hate U Give is one of few young adult novels that has a SparkNotes study guide available for teachers and students to utilize while reading the book. Because of the immediate critical reception and prominence of the book, teachers are also able to find a multitude of discussion guides and lesson plans for teaching Thomas' novel with just a simple Google search. Since the novel deals with racism and racial tensions in a community, *The Hate U Give* could potentially be taught in placement of or in conjunction with novels such as *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee or *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. Unlike Lee and Stockett, who were white women writing about black experiences, Thomas is a black woman writing about black experiences involving racism and police brutality. If teachers choose to teach Thomas's novel in conjunction with either of those classics, they can ask students to identify the impact of what it means to have a white author telling black stories in comparison to the impact of black authors telling the stories. Students could also discuss the differences between the black characters in each book, completing an assignment that has to do with the character analysis of each protagonist.

The novel is not limited to the confines of an English classroom. The topics throughout the book, specifically racism and police brutality, can lead to meaningful and stimulating conversations in history and government classes. If any social studies class has a current event component to the curriculum, teachers could potentially build a cross-curricular lesson to encompass reading *The Hate U Give* and having an open dialogue about race, police brutality, and even the action of protesting within the novel. Teachers, however, need to be aware of the sensitivity of these topics, especially in a classroom setting. Students need to feel safe to be able to voice their opinions, but they also need to be aware of the ramifications of what they say and how it may affect their peers.

Conclusion: Navigating Young Adult Literature in the Classroom Despite the Obstacles

Many young adult novels have been the objects of censorship due to subject matter that deals with things such as profane language, sex, and violence; however, this does not detract from the literary merit of these novels. The realm of young adult literature is just as beneficial in a classroom as works of literature from the traditional literary canon, with young adult novels creating a sense of familiarity among students that classics such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* cannot. In recent years, some schools have added various young adult novels such as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* to summer reading lists, but students should be given the opportunity to explore young adult titles that are not among the most popular and easily have a film adaptation that they can watch instead of reading the novel. Educators should not shy away from using young adult literature in the classroom due to the history of assigning traditional literature or the constant challenges brought against young adult titles. Instead, they should be encouraging students to read more books that are written about adolescent experiences with a young adult audience in mind. Young adult literature contains a meaningful trait that most classical works do not: the ability to generate feelings of familiarity and comfort among adolescents. Through reading young adult novels, students are able to develop a deeper understanding of the culture surrounding what it means to be an adolescent, as well as being exposed to situations that may affect them and those around them. The overarching genre of young adult literature was created as a means to tell the experiences of teenagers *for* teenagers, so the inclusion of the young adult canon in the classroom is beneficial to the development of adolescents -- *not* harmful, as those who call to censor these novels would believe.

Appendix A: Resources to Help Teach Classic and Young Adult Literature

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